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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, January 12, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NOTES FOR FOOD-SHOPPERS." Information from the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Once again, fortnightly news for the listener who shops for food and takes an interest in prices and supplies of the seasonal foods in the market. And cheerful news to start with!

The predictions are that during 1938 supplies of most foods will be larger than in 1937 and prices below last year's level. You can expect larger supplies of pork on the market as well as better-grade beef. And you can look for more rice, dried beans, walnuts, almonds, pecans, sweetpotatoes, canned vegetables, oranges and lemons.

But egg supplies will be smaller. And during the first half of the year, poultry marketings will be below their 1937 level.

The fresh-vegetable supplies will be about the same as in 1937. The men who make estimates of crops say that though fewer vegetables will come from the southern States that harvest and ship early in the season, larger crops from the later producing States will offset this. As for fruits, the general outlook now is for larger apple supplies but smaller grapefruit supplies during the first half of the year.

As for prices, count on the usual January decline in the price of beef, butter, eggs, and citrus fruits. But the trend in the price of apples, potatoes, onions, and sweetpotatoes is upward.

Beef prices probably will go down during the first half of 1938. And the quality of the beef will be better as the animals that have had a longer time on grain rations come to market. The bulk of present supplies is short-fed cattle -- those animals that have been eating grain for only 60 to 120 days. While retail prices have dropped considerably since hitting their high point in September, the sharpest drop has been in live animal prices. But by mid-December retail prices of good-grade beef in New York were about 20 percent below their September peak.

As for the price of pork in 1938, you can expect it to be below the 1937 level. Most of the increase in slaughter over 1937 will be in the last half of the year. And hog prices will go up in the next 3 months, as this is the season when fewer hogs are slaughtered. The predictions are that the price of fresh pork will move up, but that cured pork will continue downward in price.

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The price of lamb usually goes up from January to May but this year may be an exception to the usual rise. Total supplies of lamb during this period probably will be about the same as 1937 but there will be more grain-fed lambs. Though the number of lambs slaughtered in 1938 will probably be about the same as in the year just ended, the prices most likely will be below their 1937 level.

So much for meat. Now about fruit -- citrus fruit. If crop estimates are any indication, you won't have to worry about your breakfast glass of orange juice for some time. Record orange supplies are in prospect for the 1937-'38 season. Production is expected to be about one-fifth larger than a year ago with most of the increase in California Valencia or summer oranges. These summer oranges which you find on the market from May through October promise a crop more than 50 percent larger than the 1936 crop which was damaged by frost. So the price of the oranges you will buy from now to October probably will be lower than a year ago with the sharpest drop during the summer.

Florida oranges usually are cheapest in December and remain close to this level until the seasonal upswing begins in February. And California Navel prices are usually lowest in January and February. Then the seasonal price advance is underway by April. California Valencias are usually cheapest in May and then move up until their October high point.

Now here is one last note -- this news about lemons. Apparently you can indulge yourself in lemonade this year if that is one of your favorite beverages. For lemon production this year will be second highest on record. At that, the lemon crop will be only one-twentieth larger than a year ago. Lemon prices are lowest from February through April and reach their peak in the summer months. And, as you probably know, California supplies most of the lemons we use here in the United States.
